

## Exercise and Prader-Willi Syndrome

You have heard exercise is good for physical health, but did you know research also shows exercise is beneficial to mental health and mood? According to the Mayo Clinic, physical activity stimulates endorphins in the brain that elevate mood and encourage relaxation.

Exercise can fend off depression and anxiety in individuals with PWS and can even combat unwanted behaviors like physical aggression, self-injury, and destruction of material goods.

- If an individual has general anxiety, 60 minutes of physical activity a day is often enough to help them feel better.
- Individuals with higher levels of anxiety might need more regular periods of exercise throughout the day to feel better.
- Individuals that tend to be more explosive and aggressive might respond to regularly scheduled activities like playing basketball or running to help with emotional regulation.
- Exercise in the form of fun physical activities can also be helpful in redirecting unwanted behavior such as skin picking. If your loved one is skin picking, engage him or her in a game of catch or other physical activity which requires the use of their hands.
- Individuals with PWS and Sensory Processing issues can also benefit from exercise to help regulate their systems and decrease unwanted behaviors. The exercise routine should be based on the individual's need for sensory input. For example, if your loved one needs more physical input, like joint compression or heavy muscle work, using light weights, running, playing basketball, or performing wall pushups can help meet these needs. If your loved one needs more movement to help regulate, walking, rolling on a stability ball, or jumping on a trampoline may be more helpful.

How can you encourage someone with PWS to exercise?

- Do not call it exercise!!
- Make the activity fun.
- Do the activity with them.
- Make it part of the routine day.

- Use creative wording. Instead of, “It’s time for our walk,” try “Let us take a hike to look for birds!”
- Play tag, follow the leader, or engage in playful competition.

Exercise, while good for nearly everyone, can be a fun and interactive way to help individuals with PWS physically, mentally, emotionally, and behaviorally.

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